The *Elements of Art*

The Elements of Art

The building blocks
or ingredients of art.

LINE

- A line is an identifiable path created by a point moving in space.
- It is one-dimensional and can vary in width, direction, and length.
- Lines often define the edges of a form.
- Lines can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, straight or curved, thick or thin.
- They lead your eye around the composition and can communicate information through their character and direction.

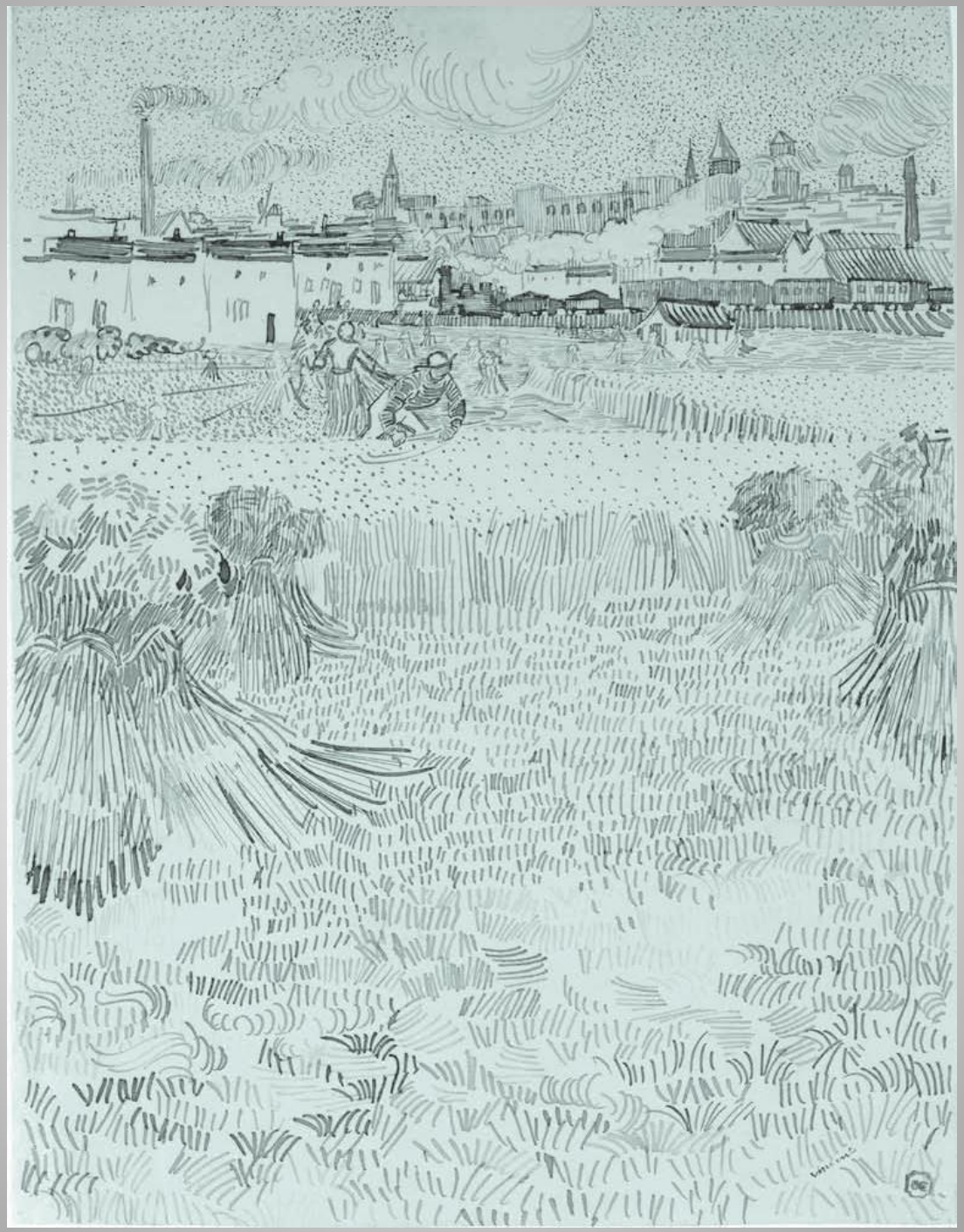
horizontal

vertical

diagonal

straight

curved



Pablo Picasso

A Storm on the Mediterranean Coast, Claude-Joseph Vernet, 1767

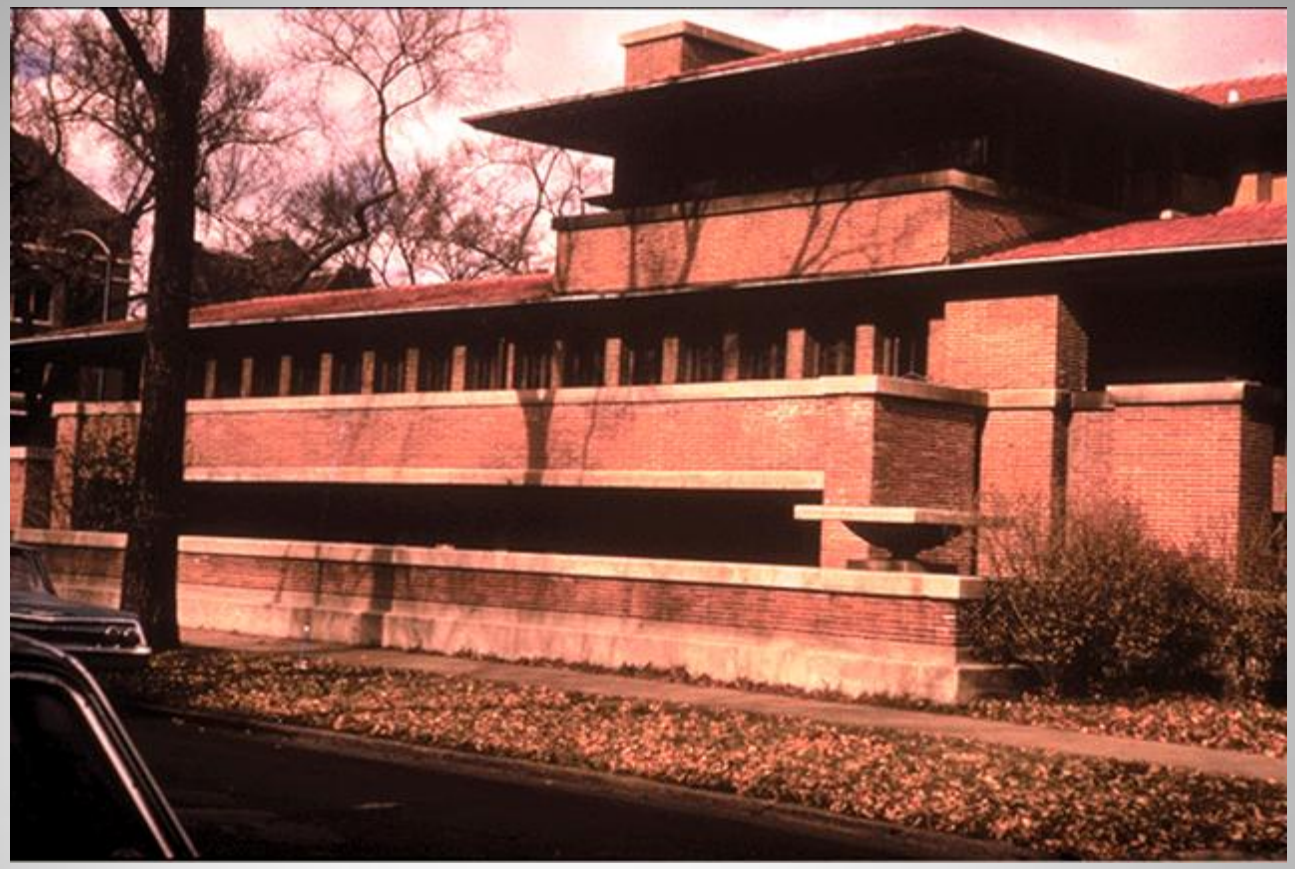
Horizontal lines
suggest a feeling of rest or repose because objects parallel to the earth are at rest. In this landscape, horizontal lines also help give a sense of space. The lines delineate sections of the landscape, which recede into space. They also imply continuation of the landscape beyond the picture plane to the left and right.

A Storm on the Mediterranean Coast, Claude-Joseph Vernet, 1767

Diagonal lines
convey a feeling of movement. Objects in a diagonal position are unstable. Because they are neither vertical nor horizontal, they are either about to fall or are already in motion. The angles of the ship and the rocks on the shore convey a feeling of movement or speed in this stormy harbor scene.

Saint Bavo, Haarlem,
Pieter Jansz.
Saenredam, 1634

Vertical lines
often communicate a sense of height because they are perpendicular to the earth, extending upwards toward the sky. In this church interior, vertical lines suggest spirituality, rising beyond human reach toward the heavens.



Horizontal and vertical lines used in combination communicate stability and solidity. Rectilinear forms with 90-degree angles are structurally stable. This stability suggests permanence and reliability.

Bull. Sculpture by Robert J. McKnight.

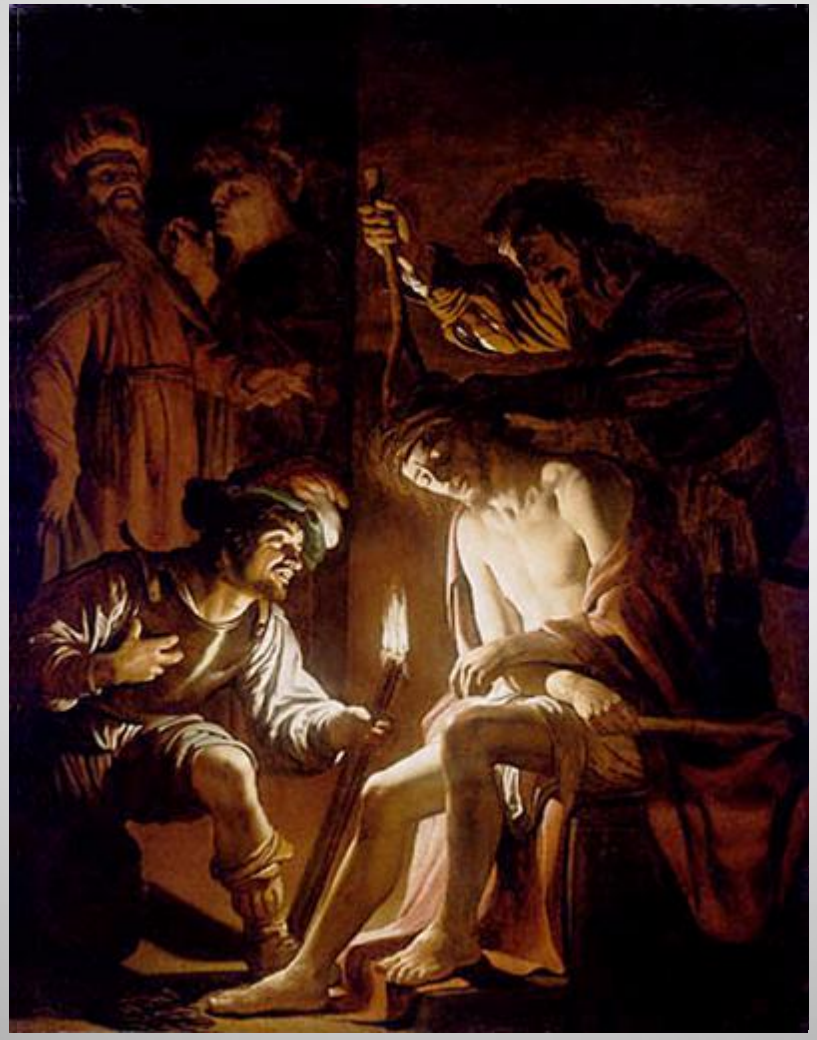
A curved line
is dynamic, ever changing. It has more contrast than a straight line and it is more naturalistic.

Color

Light reflected off objects. Color has three main characteristics:

1. Hue

2. Value describes the brightness of color.



3. **Intensity** describes the purity or strength of a color.

The Annunciation, Dieric Bouts, 1450–1455

Shape and form

define objects in space. Shapes have two dimensions–height and width–and are usually defined by lines. Forms exist in three dimensions, with height, width, and depth.

Studies for a Ceiling Decoration, Charles de la Fosse, about 1680

Shape has only height and width.
Shape is usually, though not always, defined by line, which can provide its contour. In this image, rectangles and ovals dominate the composition. They describe the architectural details for a ceiling fresco.

Rearing Horse, Adriaen de Vries, 1610–1615

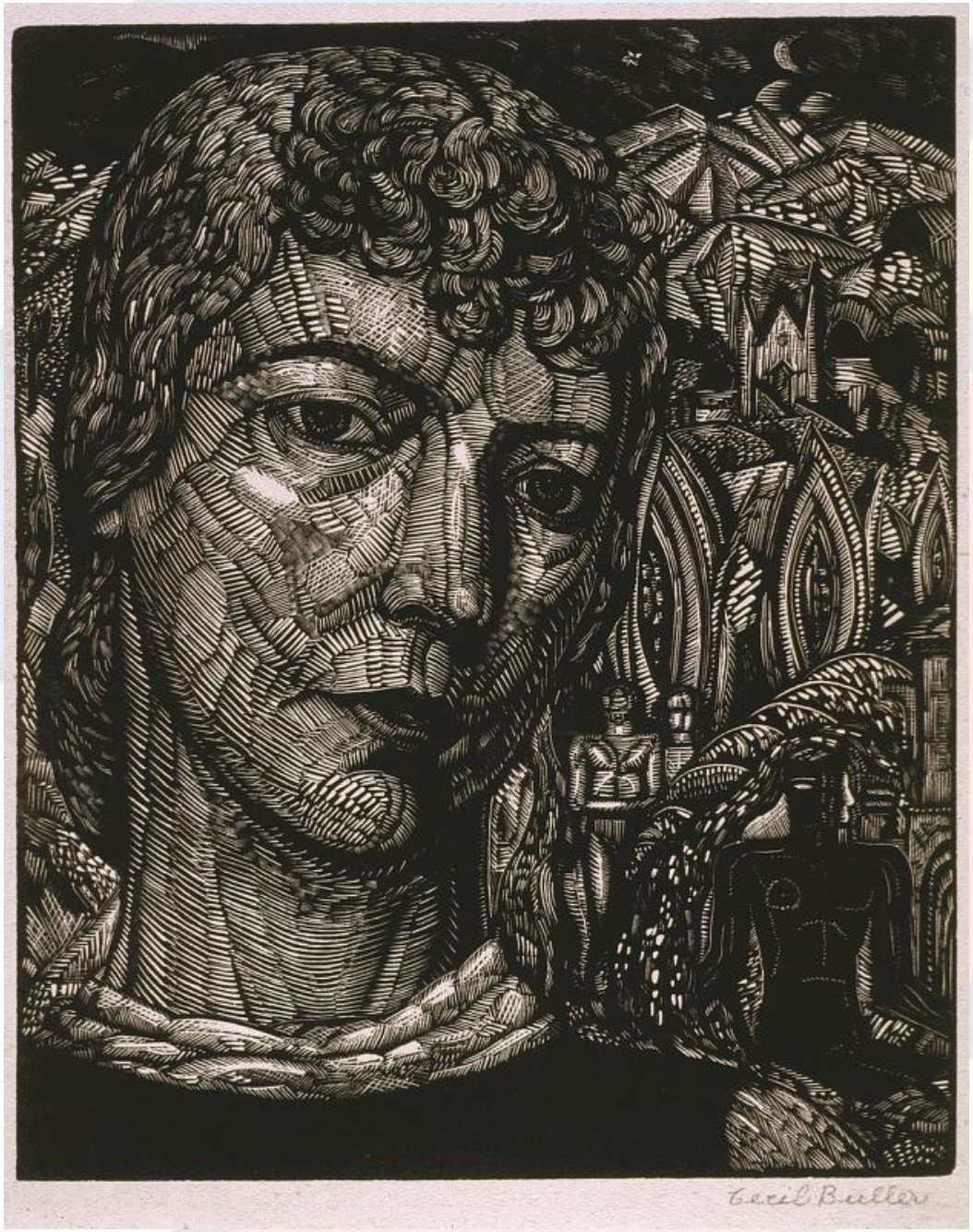
Form has depth as well as width and height. Three-dimensional form is the basis of sculpture, furniture, and decorative arts. Three-dimensional forms can be seen from more than one side, such as this sculpture of a rearing horse.

Gold Wreath, Greek, 300–100 B.C.

Organic shapes and forms
are typically irregular or asymmetrical. Organic shapes are often found in nature, but man-made shapes can also imitate organic forms. This wreath uses organic forms to simulate leaves and berries.

TEXTURE

The surface quality or "feel" of an object, its smoothness, roughness, softness, etc. Textures may be actual or implied.



Cecil
Buller

TEXTURE

Texture depicted in two-dimensions:

Artists use color, line, and shading to imply textures. In this painting, the man's robe is painted to simulate silk.

The ability to convincingly portray fabric of different types was one of the marks of a great painter during the 17th century.

Portrait of Agostino Pallavicini, Anthony van Dyck, 1621–1623

S P A C E

The distance or area between, around, above, below, or within things.

Claude

Foreground, Middleground and Background (creates DEPTH)

Positive (filled with something) and Negative (empty areas).

Duccio di Buoninsegna, Italian (active 1278–1318)
The Raising of Lazarus
1310–11

Saint Bavo, Haarlem,
Pieter Jansz. Saenredam,
1634

Three-dimensional space

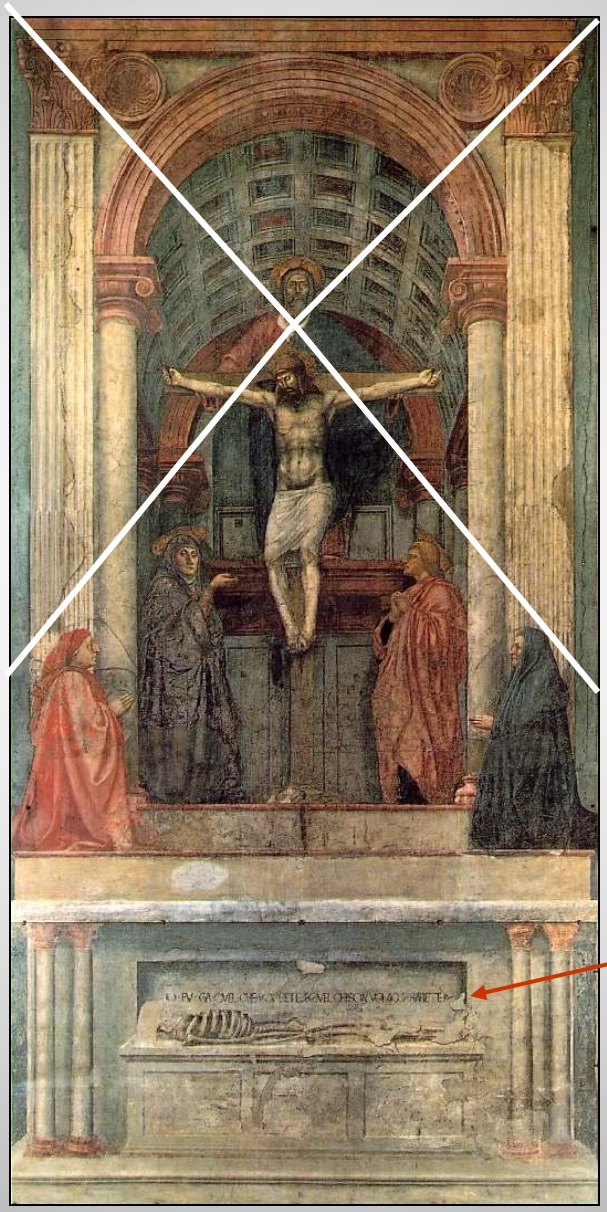
The perfect illusion of three-dimensional space in a two-dimensional work of art is something that many artists, labored to achieve. The illusion of space is achieved through perspective drawing techniques and shading.

The white lines illustrate the use of 1-point linear perspective in "View of an Ideal City", a painting by Piero della Francesca. The point of convergence is called the *vanishing point*.

Perspective

Perspective!
Perspective!
Perspective!
Perspective!
Perspective!
Perspective!
Perspective!

First use of linear perspective!



- *The Trinity*
- Masaccio
- 1427

What you are, I once was; what I am, you will become.

Tap screen to play video